

The Honorable Bill Shuster, Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings
and Emergency Management
Hearing on “Proposed Amendments to and Reauthorization
of the National Dam Safety Program Act”
July 26, 2006

The Subcommittee will come to order.

We are here today to discuss the proposed amendments to and reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Program.

Dam Safety has been a national and federal concern since President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law the Flood Control Act of 1936. This legislation, which authorized the federal government to construct flood control systems throughout the nation’s high risk flood zones, was in direct response to the deadly floods that hit the Johnstown, Pennsylvania area in 1936.

After additional dam failures in the 1970's, President Carter further expanded the federal government's role in addressing the dam safety issue by creating the National Dam Safety Program we know today.

Administered by FEMA, the program's mission is to reduce the risks to life and property from dam failure in the United States. This is achieved through a number of Program components which include the National Inventory of Dams, the National Performance of Dams Program, and the Dam Safety Program Management Tools. The program also helps exchange information between federal and state dam safety partners through the National Dam Safety Review Board and the Interagency Committee on Dam Safety.

Funds from the program also benefit research, development of information technology, and the training of the state dam safety officials, who are considered the nation's first line of defense from dam failures.

Over the past 25 years, the National Dam Safety Program helped mitigate the risk of dam failure by providing technical

and financial assistance to state dam safety officials and the 80,000 or so dams they oversee.

Of great concern to the nation is the ever growing number of “high-hazard” dams. These dams, whose failure could result in the loss of life or severe property damage, total over 10,000 nationwide. The increasing number of “high-hazard” dams will continue as our population grows and spawns new downstream developments. The National Dam Safety Program has increased the level of knowledge and preparedness to prevent and mitigate the effects of dam failures, including the ever-growing number of “high-hazard” dams.

Mr. Kuhl has introduced H.R. 4981, which reauthorizes and improves the National Dam Safety Program. Mr. Kuhl has been a leader on this issue and I commend him on his efforts to see this program reauthorized.

Ms. Kelly has introduced H.R. 1105, which amends the Program to provide funding for repairs to publicly owned dams across the United States. This grant program would fund repair

of the most critical dams, which the Association of State Dam Safety Officials estimates is a \$10 billion need over the next 12 years.

I am proud to be cosponsors of both bills, and anticipate reauthorization of the program in the near future.

I, with my fellow Pennsylvanians, understand the need for programs such as the National Dam Safety Program. Our region has faced numerous costly and deadly floods over the past two hundred years. I look forward to hearing from all of our witnesses.